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Several methods and techniques proven successful in literacy and adult basic education are discussed. The Laubach method does not depend on a plot but uses a chart which pictures an English phrase, letter, word, and stylized representation of the first letter of the word. The Gouin Theme Method is Gestalt in approach as the entire sentences are linked to others and form a story. The Community Approach Method structures lessons around daily happenings familiar to adult students. The Basic English Method provides an 850 word basic vocabulary for foreign born illiterates. A four step experience is used in the Direct Method, consisting of (1) filmstrips of whole stories expressed in underlined sentences, (2) duplication of the story through use of flash cards and other teaching materials, (3) phonetic attack on words, and (4) comprehension. A sixth method adds television teaching in the Laubach Method. Establishment of good rapport and permissive classroom climate are essential to the nondirective approach in the Lark Method. Techniques discussed include global (sight reading), synthetic, analytic-synthetic, eclectic, Bloomfield, and Gray. (Footnotes and a bibliography are included.) (pt)

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A PRELIMINARY OVERVIEW OF METHODS AND TECHNIQUES IN ADULT LITERACY AND ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

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In recent months, as the Federal government begins its second year of regional and state-wide adult basic education programs, the methodology of adult basic education and of literacy education has come under increasingly closer scrutiny. Are there "best" methods and "best" techniques for use in the adult literacy classroom? Do some methods prove more "efficient" in terms of student achievement and teacher satisfaction? What literacy methods have been shown to be effective in the light of history?

There have been answers to these questions in the past. Such authorities as Wallace, Gray, Laubach, McCracken and Bloomfield have evolved distinctive literacy and basic education methodologies, each highly successful under certain well-defined circumstances. In an effort to provide some insight into the several methodologies which have proved to be successful in the past, and thereby to provide contemporary educators with a basis for comparison, however limited, this paper has been prepared.

DEFINITIONS

The terms "method" and "technique" have often eluded precise definition: Cass has described "method" as "how to do a specific job in the best way in a particular situation," and "technique" as "how to carry out the method chosen."[1]

Verner feels that "method" is an administrative decision as to how the educational program is to be conducted, the decision being made on the

basis of the adult whom the program is intended to serve.[2] The concept of technique for Verner is, therefore, an "operational decision, predicated upon the utility of the techniques, in facilitating learning objectives in terms of acquiring information, mastering a skill, or achieving co-operative action."[3]

In essence, the Cass and Verner definitions are identical. Within this context, that method is the organizational mechanism for doing the teaching, and technique is the manner in which the method is applied, the terms will be employed in this paper.

In much the same manner the terms "illiterate," "functional illiterate," and "adult basic education student" have come to assume almost a synonymity when used by workers in the field. Dentler, for example, feels that (an illiterate). . . "has the functional equivalent of less than five years of school,"[4] while Laubach maintains that (an illiterate). . . "cannot read or write."[5] To Smith, however, a person with less than "five years of schooling is a functional illiterate."[6] It is in this latter sense that many authorities define the term "adult basic education student," as a person not functionally literate within his society.

Because the rapid advances in technology in our time have rendered obsolescent not only human work and labor skills, but industrial and educational equipment, and cultural mores and folkways as well, it might be best, for purposes of this paper, to consider that the original meaning of the terms "illiterate," "functional illiterate" and "adult basic education student" has been rendered virtually obsolescent as well: i. e., the march

of research, development and technology has significantly re-defined the social and economic role of those individuals who possess less than a high-school education. Within this context: that all persons of less than 12th-grade education are "illiterate," "functionally illiterate," and "adult basic education students," this paper has been written.

In this paper will be discussed first, the several methods of approaching the adult at the lower level of the educational spectrum; and second, the several techniques or modes of applying the methods cited.

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In 1964, UNESCO completed some research in comparative education, and published an interesting booklet on illiteracy training throughout the world: Publication No. 266, UNESCO, 1964, which cites the literacy education theories of Frank Laubach, among others.[7]

The name Laubach, as used in the phrase "Laubach Method," is well known throughout the world. Laubach's successful use of his "Key Word" method during thirty years among "the silent billions"--as he terms the illiterate - stimulated campaigns against illiteracy in 96 countries in 274 languages, and made the Laubach Method a household phrase around the globe.[8] Laubach works from simple charts, similar to the Engliddish chart shown in Fig. 1. It can be seen how Laubach's artist has drawn, from left to right, an Engliddish phrase, then a letter, a word; then contained within pictures stylized representations of the first letter of the word being learned. This scheme is carried out on each chart, for the same word, in five separate and distinct ways. Laubach believed, as did William James, that if a learner

sees and hears some fact to be learned at least five times, the learner comes to learn that fact.[9]

Laubach indicates that his method does not depend upon "story" plots, doesn't need to be "interesting" because he maintains that adult illiterates are excited about being able to read, and don't require the intellectual stimulation of a plot or of an interesting story. Several experts, Gouin among them, dispute Laubach's refusal to recognize the need for plot. In Laubach's insistence upon mechanical rote without interest lies this method's greatest weakness: adults do not like to be treated like children, despite the fact that they might have a child's limited reading ability.

A second method, the Gouin Theme Method, is oriented upon Gestalt psychology thought patterns first proposed by German psychologists in 1879. Gouin attacks the literacy problems from a frame of psychological reference in the Whole, not in the Parts, as does Laubach. The Gouin Theme Method makes use of entire sentences, read for meaning, and linked in thought and content to several additional sentences, all of which together form a coherent story. Each of the sentences is expressed in the first person, present tense, and each of them can be dramatized separately in the classroom by the students. In practice, the sentences are first expressed orally by teacher and students together; then the sentences are written on the chalkboard, and dramatized. The strengths of this method lie in reading, comprehension, and selection of meanings. Its weaknesses lie in the fact that adult basic and illiterate students often tend to "memorize the configuration" of words; thus when approaching an unfamiliar word, they will

דהים יז אַ יר
דהים יז אַ גרל
דהים יז א דאָג
דהים יז אַ נאָוז
דהים יז א מאָוטה
דהים יז אַ ליפ

דיהים יז דהאַ גרלז יר
דהים יז דהאַ גרלז נאָוז
דהים יז דהאַ גרלז מאָוטה
דהים יז דהאַ גרלז ליפ

דהים יז דהאַ דאָגז יר
דהים יז דהאַ דאָגז נאָוז
דהים יז דהאַ דאָגז מאָוטה
דהים יז דהאַ דאָגז ליפ

Figure No. 1.
From Toward World Literacy by Frank C. Laubach and Robert S. Laubach,
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hesitate because they have not been trained in the parts of the word, the letters. The Gouin Theme Method is most successful when used in teaching foreign—born illiterates, though it is quite successful throughout the world with many types of native-born illiterates.[10]

A third method of teaching illiterates assumes some of the characteristics of the Gouin Theme Method because it is used to attack reading and writing problems through the Gestalt psychological concept of progressing in context from Wholes to parts of the whole. This is the so-called Community Approach Method, a method which forces students and teachers to structure their mutual lessons around daily happenings in the community and the world. This method makes use of the word, the whole sentence, the whole paragraph, all oriented about a central community theme: the pine tree outside the window, the auto accident at the street corner, the helicopter overhead.[11] The Community Approach Method is used by teachers who know that we cannot divorce adults from the world about them. Yet the method has its weakness, despite several obvious strengths: The Community Approach requires a highly creative instructor, and a highly permissive classroom atmosphere, with students capable of maximal verbal response. It is better used in the upper elementary, or latter stages of adult basic education, when skills have been well established and students are more self-assured.

A fourth method, the Basic English Method, is used almost exclusively with foreign-born illiterates; it makes use of "Basic English" word lists of approximately 850 words.[12] Its strength lies in its usefulness in providing

a rapid learning experience for foreign-born adults, making possible immediate facility in conversation. It employs certain speech patterns, demonstrations and dramatizations, and highly socialized interactions of teachers and students. Its weaknesses lie in its very narrow vocabulary limits, and its limited usefulness with native-born illiterates who require broader horizons in spelling, writing, and reading.

A fifth widely used and highly successful method is the Direct Method, adapted for recent use with children in the Newcastle experiments, and used during World War II to train illiterate servicemen.[13] In the Direct Method, a four-step experience reputedly used to obtain the fastest responses from illiterates, the filmstrip, plays a vital role. Using filmstrips based on whole stories expressed in underlined and whole sentences, and simple illustrations, an instructor leads the class through letters, words, sentences, paragraphs, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, numbers and an entire learning sequence during a 45-minute film strip session conducted in the dark. Later, in the second step of the Direct Method, the students are asked to work with flash cards, simple books and workbooks whose contents duplicate the words, sentences, and paragraphs of the film strip. In a third step, the phonetics step, students are taught how to develop word attack, and in the fourth and final step, students are led to a comprehension of phrases, sentences, and paragraphs of more difficult items. The latter comprehension instruction includes the reading of street signs, the noting of details, and the identification of sequences of thought and reading for specific information, as in an operations manual. In the Direct Method,

80% of all initial reading instruction takes place at the projection screen. The strength of this method lies in its utility for focusing the attention of the student on the content, and the degree of interest which the content had for the adult student. McCracken, who conducted the Newcastle experiments, insists that "we all learn most about those things in which we are most interested."[14] The weakness of this method, which may not be apparent from the evidence presented, is that the evidence was compiled during highly structured situations; i.e., when students could be rigidly controlled throughout the learning hours of the day, and all students possessed extremely high motivations for literacy training.

A sixth method was experimentally tested in 1961, when Peerson taught illiterates using the Laubach Streamlined English method in a form of television teaching. Her study showed that television teaching is less effective than person-to-person instruction in the teaching of reading skills. But her students achieved reading improvements, for adults, equivalent to the achievements of children midway through the second grade.

Holst, in a study similar to the Peerson study, taught 61 adults in 1959; he discovered that the average gain in grade level achievement, after TV instruction, was 2.5, with a high of 2.8 or almost three years.[16]

Another contemporary literacy training method is that developed by Mary A. Wallace, the originator of the Wallace LARK Literacy and Related Knowledge Foundation Schools of Yakima, Washington. Head of one of the nation's great literacy training programs, Wallace feels that the first step in the training of the illiterate is "to break the illiteracy cycle" by:

(1) getting the student to "admit" he is an illiterate; and (2) establishing immediate emotional rapport with the student in order to change the student's self image. By means of repeated verbalized indications of the teacher's emotional support, Wallace involves every student in every lesson, and stimulates the student to think for himself.[17]

Mary Wallace emphasized the necessity of teaching in a permissive classroom. She makes use of the non-directive teaching approach, and re-emphasizes the need for a high level of empathy for the student, in order to obtain immediate results. She advocates an adaptation of the Synthetic Approach, teaching all 26 letters of the alphabet in five days. She then works into words that are in the speaking vocabularies of the students. The LARK Schools permit students to listen at length to oral reading, hoping thereby that the student will gain insight into sentence meaning and oral attack.

The strength of the LARK technique lies in its non-directive, permissive approach, by means of which students come to know themselves, and then to know and appreciate the social roles of others. But in this non-directive, permissive approach also lies the weakness of the Wallace technique: the difficulty of hiring the mature teachers required for application of non-directive, permissive modes of teaching, teachers with wide experience, much empathy, and great understanding. Master Teachers such as these are difficult to identify and to hire.

A more directive mode of literacy teaching is found in the Stewart "Moonlight School" method, first originated in the Kentucky hills in 1911

by a woman named Cora Stewart. By means of an intensive campaign which included "No Illiteracy Sundays," horseback riding messengers, Governor's proclamations, a state-wide Illiteracy Committee, voluntary teachers and recruiters, more than 1200 illiterate mountaineers were brought to log cabin schools one moonlight night in September, 1911, for Socratic instruction and drills in history, civics, English, agriculture, and horticulture. The schools were wholly directive in nature, yet achieved widespread success.

As these brief indications may show, it may be that no single method is universally effective. The method of choice would seem to be a compromise of two or three methods, selected as experience and changing circumstances may dictate.

Now that we have studied, however cursorily, the methodology of literacy training, let us survey the techniques of literacy training, the means by which the method is brought to bear in an adult basic education classroom.

Over the years there have been four major categorizations of technique: the global or analytic technique, the synthetic technique, the analytic-

synthetic technique, and eclectic technique.

The global technique makes use of stories or sentences which the group learns to read at sight; the group then studies the sentences independently, and finally the words are studied. In this method you can recognize the application of Gestalt psychological theory, or the logical progression from whole to parts. This technique is used by teachers who feel that meanings

and interest are paramount to their adult students. This latter, the strength of the global technique, represents the use of a mature thinking which gives credit to the adult basic student for being a functionally social though untrained, human being. Its weakness lies in the fact that the student very often does not come to recognize the patterns of letters not contained in words being learned, and later experiences difficulty in reading unrecognized and unfamiliar words. He has no 'attack' experience upon which to base his future readings.

The synthetic technique operates in a mode directly opposed to the global technique; the learner progresses from the parts or the letters through words and through sentences and paragraphs. This technique is used, you recall, in applying the Laubach Method in the classroom, on television, or in the field. Its strength is that it can be used to achieve rapid reading of many foreign languages, even though some difficulty is experienced in using it to teach English. Its weakness lies in the fact that the rote learning of letters and words can often become appallingly dull to the adult student; there are no meaning content for him and no interest. Moreover, he learns words in parts so that his oral reading often assumes a "broken record" monotone, which may carry on into later life.

The analytic-synthetic technique combines the better portions of both of the foregoing methods, the teacher attacking words, letters or sentences as circumstances may dictate, and as student ability improves. In using the analytic-synthetic technique to achieve the major strengths of the two technique the teacher risks a great weakness: the "shotgun" approach to letter, word

and sentence attack may tend to confuse the learner. Moreover, the teacher may forget to use significant portions of both methods during the training sessions, so that technique "blanks" may occur.

The fourth well-known technique, the eclectic technique, makes use of all three of the foregoing skills; it is an amalgam of applied approaches. Its strength lies in its serviceability under many classroom conditions; its weakness lies in its indecisive attack on the teaching problems of literacy classes. The eclectic method is used most often in connection with literacy problems of reading, writing, and calculation skills.

A recent experimental technique, called the Bloomfield Technique, applies Rudolph Flesch's theories: "Teach the student what each letter stands for and he can read." Essentially the Bloomfield Technique, or the Linquistic Approach, is a systematized application of the Laubach Method, though in more modern dress. Bloomfield emphasizes that there is an essential difference between the look of words and the sound of words. Bloomfield disregards "meaning" to bring about immediate sound/letter relationships; he insists upon immediate associations of letters and sounds regardless of the meanings contained. Bloomfield feels that the adult basic education student must first know and understand the characters of the alphabet, with no writing to be performed at the outset of the course. The letters are presented, upper and lower case, together with numerals; and are persented in exercises from left to right and from top to bottom. Bloomfield says that the first task of the adult educator is to teach the student that "speech is recorded by means of written or printed signs."[20]

The strengths of the Bloomfield Technique lie in the linkage of character and sound, as Flesch suggested; in this manner the student is brought to feel familiar with the letters contained in strange words. Its weakness lies in its dullness and lack of content for adults who, because of their wider range of experience, frequently possess a greater range of visually recognizable words than do children, and who resent a piecemeal attack on concepts learned through experience.

In a later application of the Laubach Method, William S. Gray proposes a technique of six primary steps:

1. Become acquainted and establish rapport with the student.

2. Write the name of the student in large letters on the board so that the student can copy them on the board.

3. Send the student to his desk to trace the name with his fingers.

4. Discuss the importance of the two types of writing: manuscript and cursive, and the reasons for their use.

5. Write short phrases on the board for each class so that the students may copy, later trace at their desks.

6. Proceed to cursive writing, a phrase at a time, a sentence at a time, a paragraph at a time, accompanied by reading activities.

Gray, who emphasizes the importance of the non-directive, permissive approach to the training of adult basic education students, is attempting to bring about a teaching approach which marries the verbalizations of the teacher to student sight, hearing and psychomotor skills within a unitized learning experience. The strength of the technique lies in its usefulness

in focusing the attention and ability of the student upon a single task; its weakness lies in its tendency to frustrate the learning potential of the student by placing too stringent demands upon his learning capacity, his intellectual level, and the co-ordination of his psychomotor skills.

Some last-minute developments in technique include Cooper's work in Norfolk, Va., in 1964, when he tested the team teaching of hard-core unemployed. These people received intensive general and technical education. Of a class of 100, 90 graduated into jobs, and continued their guidance interviews after graduation.[22]

Crohn studied programmed instruction techniques, but found that adult basic students require additional visual discrimination training and "an increase in the use of context as stimuli support."[23]

Whatever the status of the continuing debate concerning which is the "best method" or "best technique" for use in the adult basic education classroom, there remains in this country a healthier and more progressive outlook toward the education of the functionally illiterate and the culturally deprived. In implementing programs to erase functional and total illiteracy, the nation is making great strides toward the achievement of a "Great Society."

FOOTNOTES

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2. Coolie Verner, "Definition of Terms," Adult Education: Outlines of an Emerging Field of University Study (Chicago: Adult Education Association, 1964), p. 36.

3. Ibid.

4. Robert A. Dentler and Mary Ellen Warshauer, Big City Drop-Outs and Illiterates (New York: Center for Urban Studies, 1965), p. 12.

5. Frank C. Laubach, Thirty Years With the Silent Billion (Westwood, N. J., Fleming H. Revell Co., 1960), p. 13.

6. Edwin H. Smith and Marie P. Smith, Let's Teach Adults Reading, ed. Coolie Verner, Florida State Department of Education Bulletin No. 71H-2 (Tallahassee: Florida State Department of Education, 1961), p. 3.

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8. Frank C. Laubach and Robert S. Laubach, Toward World Literacy (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1960), p. 1.

9. Ibid., p. 14.

10. Cass, p. 158.

11. Ibid., p. 160.

12. Ibid., p. 161.

13. Helen M. Robinson, "Training Illiterates in the Army," Basic Education for the Disadvantaged Adult, ed. Frank W. Lanning and Wesley A. Mann (New York: Houghton A. Mifflin, 1966), p. 372.

14. Glenn McCracken, The Right to Learn (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1959), p. 163.

15. Nell Peerson, An Experiment, With Evaluation, in the Eradication of Adult Illiteracy by use of Television Instruction over a State Educational Television Network Supplemented by Supervised Group Viewing and by the Related Use of Project-Supplied Materials of Instruction (Florence, Ala.: Florence State College, 1961).

16. Howard Hulst, Summary of the Literacy Project (Memphis: WKNO-TV, Memphis State University, 1959).

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19. Smith, p. 11.

20. Leonard Bloomfield and Clarence L. Barnhart, Let's Read (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1961), p. 20.

21. William S. Gray, The Teaching of Reading and Writing (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1956), p. 228-244.

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23. Burrill L. Crohn, "The Diebold Literacy Project: Programming for the Illiterate Adult," Programmed Instruction, 3 (No. 9, 1964).

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